

George Moses Horton

Grade Level: 6,7,8

Subject Area: Social Studies, Language Arts

General Overview

George Moses Horton was a slave who composed poetry and sold his poems to university students. His initial book was the first one published in the South by an African American. The sample acrostic was written by Horton and paid for by Sion Hart Rogers, UNC student in the 1840s, as a gift for Miss Mary E. V. Powell.

Activity 1

Time Required: 45 minutes-1 class period (*teacher's discretion*)
Materials: [George Moses Horton Worksheet \(pdf\)](#)
Supplementary images and newspaper articles (online)
Internet access (optional)

State Standards	Grade 6	Language Arts	Goals 1.02, 2.01, 4.01, 5
	Grade 7	Language Arts	Goals 1.02, 2.01, 4.01, 5
	Grade 8	Language Arts	Goals 1.02, 2.01, 4.01, 5
		Social Studies	Goals 3.04, 4.04, 5.02, 5.05

Preparation

Students should read the acrostic, as well as the short biographical sketch of Horton.

Instructions

Answer questions prompted by the instructor on content gained from visiting the website and reading the provided materials.

DOB: 1797 DOD: 1883

George Moses Horton was born around 1797 in Northampton County, North Carolina. He was born a slave, the property of William Horton. When he was a child, the Horton's moved to Chatham County and he taught himself to read. Horton also began to compose poems. In 1814 he was given to James Horton, the son of William and in 1843 to Hall Horton, James' son.

Before he was 20 years old George began creating acrostics, reciting and selling them to students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The acrostics used the names of students' sweethearts. Horton sold the acrostics for 25 to 75 cents. He also sold fruit at the university, and with this money he brought his time from his master at 25 cents (and later 50 cents) per day. In 1829, Horton published a book entitled [The Hope of Liberty](#). It was the first book published in the south by an African-American. He later went on to publish two more books.

Sometime in the 1830s George Moses Horton married a slave belonging to Franklin Snipes who was a neighbor of the Horton's. Although the marriage was not a happy one, there were two children born into the union, a son named Free, and a daughter named Rhody. Both children took their mother's last name, Snipes.

After the Civil War, George Moses Horton allied himself with a Federal soldier and moved up north with him. He lived the rest of his life in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, until his death in 1883.

The following questions should provoke discussion.

1. What was unique about George Moses Horton's life?
2. Why was it unusual for a slave to write and sell poems?
3. Why did the UNC students purchase so many of Horton's poems?
4. What is an acrostic?

Activity 2

Time Required: 30 minutes (*teacher's discretion*)
Materials: [George Moses Horton Worksheet \(pdf\)](#)
Internet access (optional)

State Standards:	Grade 6	Language Arts	Goals 1.02, 5
	Grade 7	Language Arts	Goals 1.02, 5

Preparation

Students should refer back to Horton's original acrostic as well as www.holycross.edu/departments/socant/dhummon/acrostics/acrostics.html.

Instructions

Students should create an acrostic with their own or someone else's name.

Extension

1. Students may investigate other slaves who did unusual jobs.
[Follow the link to our page on Mille-Christine, born slaves that did an unusual job.](#)

Sources

PC 1533 Simpson and Biddle Papers, North Carolina State Archives

Walser, Richard. The Black Poet: Being the Remarkable Story (partly Told by Himself) of George Moses Horton a North Carolina Slave. New York, NY: Philosophical Library Inc., 1966.